



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 10  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98101

March 24, 2008

Reply To  
Attn Of: ETPA-088

Ref: 06-075-AFS

John Hensley, Project Manager  
Department of Agriculture - U. S. Forest Service  
Malheur National Forest  
431 Patterson Bridge Road, P.O. Box 909  
John Day, OR 97845

Dear Mr. Hensley:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the **Thorn Fire Salvage Recovery Project** (CEQ No. 20080061) in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309, independent of NEPA, specifically directs EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions. Under our policies and procedures we evaluate the document's adequacy in meeting NEPA requirements.

The proposed action includes salvage of dead and dying trees on approximately 3,668 acres and the removal of potential danger trees for public safety for approximately 24.2 miles along haul routes and open forest travel routes. Salvage methods would include ground-based harvest on approximately 468 acres and helicopter harvest on approximately 3,200 acres. The EIS identifies Alternative 2 as the proposed action. Alternative 3, the preferred action, would avoid Management Area (MA) 10, the Aldrich Mountain semi-primitive non-motorized area and potential wilderness.

We appreciate the effort the Forest Service has taken to address the comments we submitted on the draft EIS. In particular we appreciate the elimination of proposed activities in MA 21 and MA 10. Also, the additional information regarding jobs and income in the vicinity of the project address our concerns about the trade-offs between short-term economic returns and long-term production and ecological sustainability in the proposed alternatives. Clearly, the values, attitudes and beliefs about salvage harvest activities are diverse, representing both extremes of potential actions (no salvage vs. all salvage).

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Mike Letourneau at (206) 553-6382.

Sincerely,

/s/  
Christine Reichgott, Manager  
NEPA Review Unit